

A
S E R M O N

Concerning the
Unity of the Divine Nature
AND THE
B. T R I N I T Y.

By JOHN *Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.*

L O N D O N :

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Unity of the Divine Nature, and the B. Trinity, &c.

I T I M. II. 5.

For there is one God.



THE Particle *for* leads us to the consideration of the Context and Occasion of these words, which in short is this. The design of this *Epistle* is to direct *Timothy*, to whom *St. Paul* had committed the Government of the Church of *Ephesus*, how he ought to demean himself in that great and weighty Charge. And at the beginning of this Chapter he gives direction concerning *Publick Prayers* in the Church; that *Prayers* and *Thanksgiving* be made for all men, and for all Ranks and Orders of men; especially for *Kings* and all that are in Authority, that under them Christians might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

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And this he tells us was very suitable to the *Christian Religion*, by which God designed the *Salvation of Mankind*; and therefore it must needs be very acceptable to him that we should offer up *Prayers and Thanksgivings* to him in behalf of *all men*: For this, saith the *Apostle*, is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth.

And then it follows in the next words, For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a Ransome for all: As if he had said, this universal Charity of Christians, in praying for all men, must needs be very acceptable to Him to whom we put up our Prayers, God the Father, who sent his Son for the Salvation of all men: And to Him likewise by whom we offer up our Prayers to God, and is among us Christians the only Mediator between God and Men, in virtue of that Price and Ransome which he paid for the Redemption of all Mankind: I say, for this reason it must needs be very acceptable to Him that we should pray for all men, because he dyed for all men, and now that He is in Heaven at the right hand of God intercedes with him for the Salvation of those for whom he dyed: There is One God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ

Christ Jesus, who gave himself a Ransome for all.

Which words, though they be brought in to prove more immediately that it is acceptable to God our Saviour, that we should put up Prayers to Him for all men, because he desires the Salvation of all men, and hath sent his Son to purchase the Salvation of all men, by the Sacrifice of himself; and in virtue of that Sacrifice to be the only Mediator between God and us: I say, though this be the immediate scope and design of these words, yet they are likewise a direction to us, unto whom we ought to address our Prayers, namely, to God; and by whose mediation and intercession we ought to put up our Prayers to God the Father, namely, by his Son Jesus Christ, who is constituted the only Mediator between God and Men.

There are several Propositions contained in this and the following verse; but I shall at present confine my self to the first, namely, That there is One God, that is, but One, as St. Paul elsewhere expresth it, *There is none other God but One.* And 1 Cor. 8. Moses lays this as the Foundation of the Natural Law, as well as of the Jewish Religion, *The Lord* Deut. 4. *he is One God, and there is none besides him,* that is, 35. besides Jehovah, whom the People of Israel did worship as the only true God. And this the Prophet Isaiah perpetually declares in opposition

to the Polytheism and variety of Gods among the
 Ifai. 44. *Heathen. I am the first, and I am the last, and be-*
 6. *sides me there is no God. And again, Is there any*
 v. 8. *God besides me? there is no God, I know not any: He,*
 who hath an infinite knowledge and knows all
 things, knows no other God. And our B. Sa-
 viour makes this the *Fundamental Article* of all Re-
 ligion, and the knowledge of it necessary to
 every man's Salvation, This, says He, is life eter-
 nal, to know thee the only true God.

The *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* is a *Notion* where-
 in the greatest and the wisest part of Mankind
 did always agree, and therefore may reasonably
 be presumed to be either *natural*, or to have
 sprung from some *Original Tradition* delivered
 down to us from the *first Parents* of Mankind: I
 mean, that there is *One Supreme Being*, the *Author*
 and *Cause* of all things, whom the most ancient
 of the *Heathen Poets* commonly called the *Father*
 of Gods and men. And thus *Aristotle* in his *Meta-*
physicks defines God, the *eternal and most excellent*, or
best of all Living Beings. And this *Notion*, of *One*
Supreme Being, agrees very well with that exact
Harmony which appears in the *Frame* and *Go-*
vernment of the *World*, in which we see all
 things conspiring to one End, and continuing in
 one uniform Order and Course; which cannot
 reasonably be ascribed to any other but a con-
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stant and uniform Cause; and which to a considering man does plainly shew that all things are made and governed by that *One* powerful Principle, and great and wise *Mind* which we call *God*.

But although the generality of Mankind had a *Notion* of *One Supreme God*, yet the *Idolatry* of the *Heathen* plainly shews that this *Notion*, in process of *Time*, was greatly degenerated, and corrupted into an apprehension of a *Plurality* of *Gods*; though in *Reason* it is evident enough, that there can be no more *Gods* than *One*; and that *One*, who is of infinite Perfection, is as sufficient to all purposes whatsoever, as ten thousand *Deities*, if they were possible, could possibly be; as I shall shew in the following Discourse.

Now this multitude of *Deities*, which the fond Superstition and vain Imagination of Men had formed to themselves, were by the *Wiser* sort, who being forced to comply with the Follies of the People endeavoured to make the best of them, supposed to be either *Parts* of the *Universe* which the *Egyptians*, as *Plutarch* tells us, thought to be the same with *God*; but then the more considerable *Parts* of the *Universe* they parcelled out into several *Deities*; and as the *Ocean* hath several *Names*, according to the several *Coasts* and:

and Countries by which it passeth; so they gave several Names to this *One Deity* according to the several Parts of the World which several Nations made the Objects of their Worship.

Or else, they adored the several Perfections and Powers of the *One Supreme God* under several Names and Titles, with regard to the various Blessings and Benefits which they thought they received from them.

Thus the *Indian Philosophers*, the *Brachmans*, are said to have worshipped the *Sun* as the *Supreme Deity*; and he certainly is the most Worshipful of all sensible Beings, and bids fairest for a *Deity*; especially if he was, as they supposed, animated by a *Spirit* endued with knowledg and understanding. And if a man, who had been bred in a dark Cave, should all on the sudden be brought out at Noon-day to behold this visible World; after he had view'd and consider'd it awhile, he would in all probability pitch upon the *Sun* as the most likely, of all the things he had seen, to be a *Deity*. For if such a man had any Notion of a *God*, and were to chuse one upon sight, he would without dispute fix upon the *Sun*, and fall down before Him and worship Him.

And *Macrobius* manageth this as his main Plea for the Idolatry of the *Heathen*; that under all
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the several *Names* of their *Gods* they worshipped the *Sun*: And this diversity of *Names* was but a more distinct conception and acknowledgment of the many Blessings and advantages which Mankind received from Him, and a more particular and express Adoration of the several *Powers* and *Perfections* which were in *Him*. And this was the very best defence, and all the tolerable sense which the *Wiseſt* among the *Heathen* could make of the *multitude* of their *Deities*.

And yet whilst they generally owned *One Supreme Being* that was the *Principle* and *Original* of all things, they worshipped several *subordinate Deities* as really distinct from one another. Some of these they fancied to be *superior* to the rest and to have their residence in *Heaven*; by which *Marsilius Ficinus* supposes *Plato* to mean no more but the *Chief* of the *Angels*. These were called *Dei*, *Dij Superi* and *Dij Cælestes*, *superior* and *heavenly Gods*: The *Scripture* terms them the *Host of Heaven*, meaning the *Sun*, *Moon* and *Stars*, which they supposed to be animated, or at least to be inhabited by *Angels*, or glorious *Spirits*, whom they called *Gods*.

Other of their *Deities* were accounted much *inferior* to these, being supposed to be the *Souls* of their deceased *Heroes*; who for their great and worthy *Deeds*, when they lived upon *Earth*,
were

were supposed after Death to be translated into the number of their *Gods*. And these were called *Semidei* and *Deastri*, that is, *half Gods* and a sort of *Gods*: And as the other were *Celestial*, so these were *Δαιμόνες ἑταίχιδόμοι* a kind of *Terrestrial Spirits* that were *Presidents* and *Procurators* of Human affairs here below, that is, a middle sort of *Divine Powers* that were *Mediators* and *Agents* between *God* and *Men*, and did carry the *Prayers* and *Supplications* of *Men* to *God*, and bring down the *Commands* and *Blessings* of *God* to *Men*.

But in the midst of all this *Crowd* and confusion of *Deities*, and the various *Superstitions* about them, the *Wiser Heathen*, as *Thales*, *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Aristotle*, *Tully*, *Plutarch* and others, preserved a true *Notion* of *One Supreme God*, whom they defined an *infinite Spirit*, pure from all *Matter* and free from all *imperfection*: And all the variety of their *Worship* was, as they pretended in excuse of it, but a more particular owning of the various representations of the *Divine Power* and *Excellencies* which manifested themselves in the *World*, and of the several communications of *Blessings* and *Favours* by *them* imparted to *Men*: Nay, *Tertullian* tells us, that even when *Idolatri* had very much obscured the *Glory* of the *Sovereign Deity*, yet the greater part of

Man-

Mankind did still in their common *Forms* of *Speech* appropriate the Name of *God* in a more especial and peculiar manner to *One*, saying, *If God grant, If God please*, and the like.

So that there is sufficient ground to believe that the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*, or the *No-tion* of *One Supreme God*, *Creator* and *Governor* of the *World*, was the *Primitive* and *general* belief of *Mankind*: And that *Polytheism* and *Idol-try* were a corruption and degeneracy from the *Original Notion* which *Mankind* had concerning *God*; as the *Scripture-History* doth declare and testify.

And this account which I have given of the *Heathen Idolatry* doth by no means excuse it. For whatever may be said by way of extenuation in behalf of the wiser and more devout among them, the generality were grossly guilty both of believing *more Gods*, and of worshipping *false Gods*.

And this must needs be a very great Crime, since the *Scripture* every where declares *God* to be particularly *jealous* in this Case, and that *he will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven Images*. Nay, we may not so much as make use of sensible Images to put us in mind of *God*, lest devout Ignorance, seeing the *Worship* which *Wise men* paid towards an *Idol*, should be drawn

to terminate their Worship there, as being the very *Deity* it self; which was certainly the Case of the greatest part of the *Heathen* World.

And surely those *Christians* are in no less danger of *Idolatry*, who pay a Veneration to *Images* by kneeling down and praying before them; and in this they are much more inexcusable, because they offend against a much clearer Light; and yet when they go about to justify this Practice are able to bring no other nor better *Pleas* for themselves than the *Heathen* did for their worshipping of *Images*, and for praying to their inferior *Deities*, whom they looked upon as *Mediators* between the *Gods* in Heaven and Men upon Earth.

There is but one *Objection*, that I know of, against the general Consent of Mankind concerning the *Unity of God*; and it is this, That there was an ancient Doctrine of some of the most ancient Nations, that there were two *First Causes* or *Principles* of all things; the one the Cause of all Good, and the other of all the Evil that is in the World: The reason whereof seems to have been, that they could not apprehend how things of so contrary a nature, as *Good* and *Evil*, could proceed from one and the same Cause.

And these two *Principles* in several Nations were called by several Names. *Plutarch* says that among the *Greeks* the Good Principle was called
God,

God, and the Evil Principle *Δαίμων* or the Devil. In conformity to which ancient Tradition the Manichees, a Sect which called themselves Christians, did advance two Principles, the one infinitely Good, which they supposed to be the Original Cause of all the good which is in the World ; the other infinitely Evil, to which they ascribed all the evils that are in the World.

But all this is very plainly a corruption of a much more ancient Tradition concerning that old Serpent the Devil, the Head of the fallen Angels, who by tempting our First Parents to transgress a positive and express Law of God brought Sin first into the World and all the Evils consequent upon it ; of which the Scripture gives us a most express and particular account.

And as to the Notion of a Being infinitely Evil, into which this Tradition was corrupted, after Idolatry had prevailed in the World, besides that it is a Contradiction, it would likewise be to no purpose to assert two opposite Principles of infinite, that is of equal force and Power, for two Infinites must of necessity be equal to one another ; because nothing can be more or greater than infinite, and therefore if two infinite Beings were possible they would certainly be equal, and could not be otherwise.

Now that the Notion of a *Principle infinitely Evil* is a Contradiction will be very plain, if we consider that what is *infinitely Evil* must in strict Reasoning, and by necessary consequence, be infinitely imperfect; and therefore infinitely weak, and for that reason, though never so malicious and mischievous, yet being infinitely weak and foolish, could never be in a capacity either to contrive mischief or to execute it.

But if it should be admitted that a Being infinitely mischievous could be infinitely knowing and powerful, yet it could effect no Evil; because the opposite *Principle of infinite Goodness*, being also infinitely Wise and Powerful, they would tie up one anothers hands. So that upon this supposition the *Notion of a Deity* must signify just nothing, because by virtue of the eternal opposition and equal conflict of these *two Principles* they would keep one another at a perpetual Baye; and being just an equal Match to one another, the *one* having as much mind and power to do good as the *other* to do evil, instead of being *two Deities* they would be but *two Idols*, able to do neither good nor evil.

And having, I hope, now sufficiently cleared this *Objection*, I shall proceed to shew how agreeable this *Principle*, that *there is but one God*, is to the common Reason of Mankind, and to the clearest

clearest and most essential Notions which we have of God: And this will appear these *two* ways.

First, by considering the most essential *Perfections* of the Divine Nature.

Secondly, from the repugnancy and impossibility, the great absurdity and inconvenience of supposing more Gods than One.

First, by considering the most essential *Perfections* of the Divine Nature. *Absolute Perfection* which we ascribe to God, as the most essential Notion which Mankind hath always had concerning Him, does necessarily suppose *Unity*; because this is *essential* to the Notion of a Being that is *absolutely perfect*, that all Perfection meets and is united in such a Being: But to imagine more Gods, and some Perfections to be in one and some in another, does destroy the most *essential* Notion which men have of God, namely, that *He is a Being absolutely perfect*, that is, as perfect as is possible: Now to suppose some Perfections in one God which are not in another, is to suppose some possible Perfection to be wanting in God, which is a Contradiction to the most natural and the most easie Notion which all men have of God, that He is a Being in whom all Perfections do meet and are united: But if we suppose more Gods, each of which hath all Perfections

fections united in Him, then all but One would be superfluous and needless; and therefore by just and necessary consequence not only *may*, but of necessity *must* be supposed not to be; since *necessary existence* is *essential* to the *Deity*; and therefore if *but One God* be necessary, there can be no more.

Secondly, from the *repugnancy* and *impossibility*, the great *absurdity* and *inconvenience* of the contrary. For suppose there were more *Gods*, *two* for example; and if there may be *two* there may be a *Million*, for we can stop no where: I say, suppose *two Gods*; either these *two* would be in all Perfections equal and alike, or unequal and unlike: If equal and alike in all things then, as I said before, one of them would be needless and superfluous, and if *one* why not as well the *other*? they being supposed to be in all things perfectly alike; and then there would be no necessity at all of the being of a God; and yet it is granted on all hands that *necessary existence* is essential to the Notion of a *God*: But if they be unequal, that is, *one* of them inferior to and less perfect than the *other*, that which is inferior and less perfect could not be God, because he would not have all perfection. So that which way soever we turn the thing and look upon it, the Notion of more Gods than One is by its own repugnancy

pugnancy and self-contradiction destructive of it self.

Before I come to apply this *Doctrine* of the *Unity of God*, I must not pass by a very considerable *Difficulty*, which will most certainly arise in every mans mind; without taking particular notice of it, and endeavouring to remove it, if I can. And it is the *Doctrine* of the *B. Trinity*, or of *three real Differences* or *distinct Persons* in *One* and the same *Divine Nature*.

And though this be not a *Difficulty* peculiar only to the *Christian Religion*, as by the generality of those who urge this *Objection* against *Christians* hath been inconsiderately thought; for it is certain, that long before *Christianity* appeared in the world, there was a very ancient *Tradition*, both among *Jews* and *Heathen*, concerning *three real Differences* or *Distinctions* in the *Divine Nature*, very nearly resembling the *Christian Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, as I shall have occasion more fully to shew by and by: Yet it cannot be denied, but that this *Difficulty* doth in a more especial manner affect the *Christian Religion*; the generality of *Christians*, who do most firmly believe the *Trinity*, believing likewise at the same time, more steadfastly if it be possible, that there is but *One God*. To us, saith *St. Paul*, that is, to us *Christians*, there 1 Cor. 8. is 6.

is but One God. But how can this possibly consist with the common *Doctrine* of *Christians* concerning the *Trinity*, God the *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghost*, to each of whom they Attribute, as they verily believe the *Scripture* does, the most incommunicable *Properties* and *Perfections* of the *Divine Nature*? And what is this less in effect than to say, *That there are three Gods*?

For the clearing of this *Difficulty* I shall, with all the brevity I can, offer these following *Considerations*; which I hope, to an impartial and unprejudiced Judgment, will be sufficient to remove it, or at least to break the main force and strength of it.

- I. I desire it may be well considered, that there is a wide difference between the nice *Speculations* of the *Schools*, beyond what is revealed in *Scripture*, concerning the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, and what the *Scripture* only teaches and asserts concerning this *Mystery*. For it is not to be denied but that the *Schoolmen*, who abounded in wit and leisure, though very few among them had either exact skill in the *H. Scriptures*, or in *Ecclesiastical Antiquity* and the *Writings* of the *ancient Fathers* of the *Christian Church*: I say, it cannot be denied but that these *Speculative* and very acute men, who wrought a great part of their
Divinity

Divinity out of their own Brains as *Spiders* do *Cobwebs* out of their own bowels, have started a thousand *subtleties* about this *Mystery*, such as no *Christian* is bound to trouble his head withal; much less is it necessary for him to understand those *niceties* which we may reasonably presume that they who talk of them did themselves never thoroughly understand; and least of all is it necessary to believe them. The modesty of *Christians* is contented in *Divine Mysteries* to know what God hath thought fit to reveal concerning them, and hath no curiosity to be *wise above that which is written*. It is enough to believe what God says concerning these matters; and if any man will venture to say more, every other man surely is at his liberty to believe as he sees reason.

II. I desire it may in the next place be considered, that the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, even as it is asserted in *Scripture*, is acknowledged by us to be still a great *Mystery*, and so imperfectly revealed as to be in a great measure incomprehensible by Human Reason. And therefore though some learned and judicious Men may have very commendably attempted a more particular explication of this great *Mystery* by the strength of Reason, yet I dare not pretend to that, knowing both the difficulty and danger of such an Attempt,

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tempt, and mine own insufficiency for it.

Serm. II. All that I ever designed upon this Argument was to make out the credibility of the thing from the Authority of the *H. Scriptures*, without descending to a more particular explication of it than the *Scripture* hath given us; lest by endeavouring to lay the *Difficulties* which are already started about it new ones should be raised, and such as may perhaps be much harder to be removed than those which we have now to grapple withal. And this I hope I have in some measure done in one of the former *Discourses*. Nor indeed do I see that it is any ways necessary to do more; it being sufficient that God hath declared what he thought fit in this matter, and that we do firmly believe what he says concerning it to be true, though we do not perfectly comprehend the meaning of all that he hath said about it.

For in this and the like Cases I take an *implicit Faith* to be very commendable, that is, to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured God hath revealed, though we do not fully understand his meaning in such a Revelation. And thus every man who believes the *H. Scriptures* to be a truly *Divine Revelation* does *implicitly* believe a great part of the *Prophetical Books* of *Scripture* and several obscure expressions in those Books, though he do not particularly understand the

the meaning of all the Predictions and expressions contained in them. In like manner, there are certainly a great many very good *Christians* who do not believe and comprehend the Mysteries of Faith nicely enough to approve themselves to a *Scholastical* and *Magisterial Judge* of *Controversies*, who yet if they do heartily embrace the *Doctrines* which are clearly revealed in *Scripture* and live up to the plain *Precepts* of the *Christian Religion*, will I doubt not be very well approved by the Great and Just, and by the *infallibly Infallible Judge* of the World.

III. Let it be further considered, That though neither the word *Trinity*, nor perhaps *Person*, in the sense in which it is used by *Divines* when they treat of this *Mystery*, be any where to be met with in *Scripture*; yet it cannot be denied but that *Three* are there spoken of by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghost*, in whose Name every *Christian* is baptized, and to each of whom the highest *Titles* and *Properties* of *God* are in *Scripture* attributed: And these *Three* are spoken of with as much distinction from one another as we use to speak of *three* several *Persons*.

So that though the word *Trinity* be not found in *Scripture*, yet these *Three* are there expressly and frequently mentioned; and *Trinity* is nothing

III.

but *three* of any thing. And so likewise though the word *Person* be not there expressly applied to *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghost*; yet it will be very hard to find a more convenient word whereby to express the distinction of these *Three*: For which reason I could never yet see any just cause to quarrel at this *term*. For since the *H. Spirit* of God in *Scripture* hath thought fit in speaking of these *Three* to distinguish them from one another, as we use in common speech to distinguish *three* several *Persons*, I cannot see any reason why, in the explication of this *Mystery* which purely depends upon *Divine Revelation*, we should not speak of it in the same manner as the *Scripture* doth: And though the word *Person* is now become a *Term of Art*, I see no cause why we should decline it, so long as we mean by it neither more nor less than what the *Scripture* says in other words.

- IV. IV. It deserves further to be considered, That there hath been a very *ancient Tradition* concerning *three* real *Differences* or *Distinctions* in the *Divine Nature*; and these, as I said before, very nearly resembling the *Christian Doctrine* of the *Trinity*. Whence this *Tradition* had its original is not easie upon good and certain grounds to say; but certain it is that the *Jews* anciently had this *Notion*:
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And that they did distinguish the *Word of God*, and the *H. Spirit of God*, from *Him* who was absolutely called *God*, and whom they looked upon as the *First Principle* of all things; as is plain from *Philo Judeus*, and *Moses Nachmanides*, and others cited L. 5. by the Learned *Grotius* in his incomparable *Book of the Truth of the Christian Religion*.

And among the *Heathen*, *Plato*; who probably enough might have this *Notion* from the *Jews*, did make three *Distinctions* in the *Deity* by the *Names* of *essential Goodness*, and *Mind*, and *Spirit*.

So that whatever *Objections* this matter may be liable to, it is not so peculiar a *Doctrine* of the *Christian Religion* as many have imagined, though it is revealed by it with much more clearness and certainty: And consequently, neither the *Jews* nor *Plato* have any reason to object it to us *Christians*; especially since they pretend no other ground for it but either their own *Reason*, or an *ancient Tradition* from their *Fathers*: whereas we *Christians* do appeal to express *Divine Revelation* for what we believe in this matter, and do believe it singly upon that account.

V. It is besides very considerable, That the *Scriptures* do deliver this *Doctrine* of the *Trinity* without any manner of doubt or question concerning the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*: And not only

only so, but do most stedfastly and constantly assert that there is but *One God*: And in those very *Texts*, in which these *three Differences* are mentioned, the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* is expressly asserted; as where *St. John* makes mention of the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Spirit*, the *Unity* of these *Three* is likewise affirmed, *There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and these Three are One.*

VI. VI. It is yet further considerable, That from this *Mystery*, as delivered in *Scripture*, a Plurality of Gods cannot be inferred without making the *Scripture* grossly to contradict it self; which I charitably suppose the *Socinians* would be as loth to admit as we our selves are. And if either *Councils*, or *Fathers*, or *Schoolmen*, have so explained this *Mystery* as to give any just ground, or so much as a plausible colour for such an Inference, let the blame fall where it is due, and let it not be charged on the *H. Scriptures*; but rather, as the *Apostle* says in another Case, *Let God be true, and every Man a liar.*

VII. VIIthly and Lastly, I desire it may be considered, That it is not repugnant to Reason to believe some things which are incomprehensible by our Reason; provided that we have sufficient ground and

and reason for the belief of them : Especially if they be concerning *God*, who is in his Nature *Incomprehensible*; and we be well assured that he hath revealed them. And therefore it ought not to offend us that these *Differences* in the *Deity* are *incomprehensible* by our finite understandings; because the *Divine Nature* it self is so, and yet the belief of *that* is the Foundation of all Religion.

There are a great many things in *Nature* which we cannot comprehend how they either are, or can be : As the *Continuity of Matter*, that is, how the parts of it do hang so fast together that they are many times very hard to be parted; and yet we are sure that it is so, because we see it every day. So likewise how the small *Seeds* of things contain the whole *Form* and *Nature* of the things from which they proceed and into which by degrees they grow; and yet we plainly see this every year.

There are many things likewise in our *Selves*, which no man is able in any measure to comprehend, as to the manner how they are done and performed : As the *vital union of Soul and Body* : Who can imagine by what device or means a *Spirit* comes to be so closely united and so firmly link'd to a *material Body*, that they are not to be parted without great force and violence offer'd to Nature? The like may be said of the operations

tions of our several *Faculties* of *Sense* and *Imagination*, of *Memory* and *Reason*, and especially of the *Liberty* of our *Wills*: And yet we certainly find all these *Faculties* in our selves, though we cannot either comprehend or explain the particular manner in which the several *Operations* of them are performed.

And if we cannot comprehend the manner of those *Operations* which we plainly perceive and feel to be in our *Selves*, much less can we expect to comprehend things without us; and least of all can we pretend to comprehend the infinite *Nature* and *Perfections* of *God*, and every thing belonging to Him. For *God* himself is certainly the greatest *Mystery* of all other, and acknowledged by Mankind to be in his *Nature*, and in the particular manner of his *Existence*, incomprehensible by *Human Understanding*. And the reason of this is very evident, because *God* is infinite, and our knowledge and understanding is but finite; and yet no sober man ever thought this a good reason to call the *Being* of *God* in question.

The same may be said of *God's* certain foreknowledge of future *Contingencies* which depend upon the uncertain *Wills* of free *Agents*: It being utterly inconceivable how any *Understanding*, how large and perfect soever, can certainly

tainly know beforehand that which depends upon the *free Will* of another, which is an arbitrary and uncertain Cause.

And yet the *Scripture* doth not only attribute this Foreknowledg to God, but gives us also plain Instances of Gods foretelling such things, many Ages before they happen'd, as could not come to pass but by the Sins of Men, in which we are sure that God can have no hand; though nothing can happen without his permission: Such was that most memorable Event of the Death of *Christ* who, as the *Scripture* tells us, was by *wicked hands crucified and slain*; and yet even *this* is said to have happened according to the *determinate foreknowledg of God*, and was punctually foretold by Him some hundreds of years before. Nay, the *Scripture* doth not only ascribe this power and perfection to the *Divine Knowledge*, but *natural Reason* hath been forced to acknowledg it, as we may see in some of the wisest of the *Philosophers*. And yet it would puzzle the greatest *Philosopher* that ever was, to give any tolerable account how any Knowledg whatsoever can certainly and infallibly foresee an Event through uncertain and contingent Causes. All the reasonable satisfaction that can be had in this matter is this, that it is not at all unreasonable to suppose that *infinite Knowledge* may have ways of knowing

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things which our *finite Understandings* can by no means comprehend how they can possibly be known.

Again, there is hardly any thing more inconceivable than how a thing should be of it self, and without any Cause of its Being ; and yet our Reason compels us to acknowledge this : Because we certainly see that something is, which must either have been of it self and without a Cause, or else something that we do not see must have been of it self and have made all other things : And by this reasoning we are forced to acknowledg a *Deity*, the mind of Man being able to find no rest but in the acknowledgment of one *eternal* and *wise Mind* as the *Principle* and *first Cause* of all other things ; and this *Principle* is that which Mankind do by general consent call *God*. So that God hath laid a sure foundation of our acknowledgment of his Being in the Reason of our own Minds : And though it be one of the hardest things in the world to conceive how any thing can be of it self, yet necessity drives us to acknowledge it whether we will or no : And this being once granted, our Reason, being tired in trying all other ways, will for its own quiet and ease force us at last to fall in with the general apprehension and belief of Mankind concerning a *Deity*.

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To give but one *Instance* more; There is the like Difficulty in conceiving *how any thing can be made* out of nothing; and yet our Reason doth oblige us to believe it: Because *Matter*, which is a very *imperfect Being* and merely *passive*, must either always have been of it self; or else, by the infinite Power of a most *perfect and active Being*, must have been made out of nothing: Which is much more credible, than that any thing so *imperfect* as *Matter* is should be of it self: Because that which is of it self cannot be conceived to have any bounds and limits of its *Being* and *Perfection*; for by the same reason that it necessarily is and of it self, it must necessarily have all perfection, which it is certain *Matter* hath not; and yet *necessary Existence* is so great a Perfection, that we cannot reasonably suppose any thing that hath this Perfection to want any other.

Thus you see, by these *Instances*, that it is not repugnant to Reason to believe a great many things to be, of the manner of whole Existence we are not able to give a particular and distinct account. And much less is it repugnant to Reason to believe those things concerning God which we are very well assured he hath declared concerning Himself, though these things by our Reason should be incomprehensible.

And this is truly the Case as to the matter now under debate: We are sufficiently assured that the *Scriptures* are a *Divine Revelation*, and that this *Mystery* of the *Trinity* is therein declared to us. Now that we cannot comprehend it, is no sufficient Reason not to believe it: For if this were a good Reason for not believing it, then no man ought to believe that there is a God, because his Nature is most certainly incomprehensible. But we are assured by many Arguments that there is a God; and the same *natural Reason* which assures us that *He is*, doth likewise assure us that *He is incomprehensible*; and therefore our believing Him to be so doth by no means overthrow our belief of His Being.

In like manner, we are assured by *Divine Revelation* of the truth of this Doctrine of the *Trinity*; and being once assured of *that*, our not being able fully to comprehend it is not reason enough to stagger our belief of it. A man cannot deny what he sees, though the necessary consequence of admitting it may be something which he cannot comprehend. One cannot deny the Frame of this World which he sees with his eyes, though from thence it will necessarily follow that either *that* or something else must be of it self; which yet, as I said before, is a thing which no man can comprehend how it can be.

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And by the same Reason a man must not deny what God says, to be true ; though he cannot comprehend many things which God says: As particularly concerning this *Mystery* of the *Trinity*. It ought then to satisfy us that there is sufficient evidence that this Doctrine is delivered in *Scripture*, and that what is there declared concerning it doth not imply a Contradiction. For why should our finite understandings pretend to comprehend that which is infinite, or to know all the real *Differences* that are consistent with the Unity of an Infinite Being ; or to be able fully to explain this *Mystery* by any similitude or resemblance taken from *finite Beings* ?

But before I leave this Argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing which they of the *Church of Rome* are perpetually objecting to us upon this Occasion. And it is this, That by the same reason that we believe the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, we may and must receive that of *Transubstantiation*. God forbid : Because of all the *Doctrines* that ever were in any Religion, this of *Transubstantiation* is certainly the most abominably absurd.

However, this *Objection* plainly shews how fondly and obstinately they are addicted to their own Errors, how mishapen and monstrous forever ; insomuch that rather than the Dictates of
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their Church, how absurd soever, should be called in question they will question the truth even of *Christianity* it self; and if we will not take in *Transubstantiation*, and admit it to be a *necessary Article* of the *Christian Faith*, they grow so fullen and desperate that they matter not what becomes of all the rest: And rather than not have their Will of us in that what is *controverted*, they will give up that which by their own confession is an *undoubted Article* of the *Christian Faith* and not controverted on either Side; except only by the *Socinians*, who yet are hearty Enemies to *Transubstantiation*, and have exposed the absurdity of it with great advantage.

But I shall endeavour to return a more particular *Answer* to this *Objection*; and such a one as I hope will satisfy every considerate and unprejudiced mind, that after all this confidence and swaggering of theirs there is by no means equal reason either for the *receiving* or for the *rejecting* of these *two Doctrines* of the *Trinity* and *Transubstantiation*.

First, There is not equal reason for the *belief* of these *Two Doctrines*. This *Objection*, if it be of any force, must suppose that there is equal evidence and proof from *Scripture* for these *two Doctrines*: But this we utterly deny, and with great reason; because it is no more evident from the

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the words of *Scripture* that the *Sacramental Bread* is substantially changed into *Christ's natural Body* by virtue of those words, *This is my Body*, than it is that *Christ* is substantially changed into a natural *Vine* by virtue of those words, *I am the true Vine*; or than that the *Rock* in the *Wilderness*, of which the *Israelites* drank, was substantially changed into the *Person of Christ*, because it is expressly said, *That Rock was Christ*; or than that the *Christian Church* is substantially changed into the natural *Body of Christ*, because it is in express terms said of the *Church*, *That it is his Body*. Joh. 15. 1. Eph. 1. 23.

But besides this, several of their own most learned *Writers* have freely acknowledged, that *Transubstantiation* can neither be directly proved, nor necessarily concluded from *Scripture*: But this the *Writers* of the *Christian Church* did never acknowledge concerning the *Trinity*, and the *Divinity* of *Christ*; but have always appealed to the clear and undeniable *Testimonies* of *Scripture* for the *Proof* of these *Doctrines*. And then the whole force of the *Objection* amounts to this, that if I am bound to believe what I am sure *God* says, though I cannot comprehend it; then I am bound by the same reason to believe the greatest *Absurdity* in the *World*, though I have no manner of assurance of any *Divine Revelation* concerning it. And if this be their meaning, though we

we understand not *Transubstantiation*, yet we very well understand what they would have, but cannot grant it; because there is not equal reason to believe *two* things, for *one* of which there is good proof, and for the other no proof at all.

Secondly, neither is there equal reason for the rejecting of these *two Doctrines*. This the Objection supposes, which yet cannot be supposed but upon one or both of these two grounds: Either because these two Doctrines are equally *incomprehensible*, or because they are equally loaded with *Absurdities* and *Contradictions*.

The *First* is no good ground of rejecting any *Doctrine*, merely because it is *incomprehensible*; as I have abundantly shew'd already. But besides this, there is a wide difference between plain matters of *Sense*, and *Mysteries* concerning God; and it does by no means follow that, if a man do once admit any thing concerning God which he cannot *comprehend*, he hath no reason afterwards to believe what he himself *sees*. This is a most unreasonable and destructive way of arguing, because it strikes at the foundation of all Certainty, and sets every man at liberty to deny the most plain and evident *Truths* of *Christianity*, if he may not be humor'd in having the absurdest things in the World admitted for true. The next step will be to persuade us that we may as well deny

deny the Being of God because his Nature is incomprehensible by our Reason, as deny Transubstantiation because it evidently contradicts our Senses.

2dly. Nor are these two Doctrines loaded with the like Absurdities and Contradictions: So far from this, that the Doctrine of the Trinity, as it is delivered in the Scriptures, and hath already been explained, hath no Absurdity or Contradiction either involved in it, or necessarily consequent upon it: But the Doctrine of Transubstantiation is big with all imaginable Absurdity and Contradiction. And their own Schoolmen have sufficiently exposed it; especially Scotus, and he designed to do so, as any man that attentively reads him may plainly discover: For in his Disputation about it he treats this Doctrine with the greatest contempt, as a new Invention of the Council of Lateran under Pope Innocent III. To the Decree of which Council concerning it he seems to pay a formal submission, but really derides it as contrary to the common Sense and Reason of Mankind, and not at all supported by Scripture; as any one may easily discern that will carefully consider his manner of handling it and the result of his whole Disputation about it.

And now Suppose there were some appearance of Absurdity and Contradiction in the Doctrine of the Trinity as it is delivered in Scripture, must we therefore believe a Doctrine which is

not at all revealed in *Scripture*, and which hath certainly in it all the *absurdities* in the World, and all the *Contradictions* to *Sense* and *Reason*; and which once admitted, doth at once destroy all Certainty. Yes, say they, why not? since we of the *Church* of *Rome* are satisfied that this *Doctrine* is revealed in *Scripture*; or, if it be not, is defined by the Church, which is every whit as good. But is this equal, to demand of us the belief of a thing which hath always been controverted, not only between *us* and *them*, but even among themselves, at least till the *Council* of *Trent*? And this upon such unreasonable terms, that we must either yield this *Point* to them or else renounce a *Doctrine* agreed on both Sides to be revealed in *Scripture*.

To shew the unreasonableness of this proceeding, Let us suppose a *Priest* of the Church of *Rome* pressing a *Jew* or *Turk* to the belief of *Transubstantiation*, and because one kindness deserves another, the *Jew* or *Turk* should demand of him the belief of all the *Fables* in the *Talmud*, or in the *Alchoran*; since none of these, nor indeed all of them together, are near so absurd as *Transubstantiation*: Would not this be much more reasonable and equal than what they demand of us? Since no Absurdity, how monstrous and big forever, can be thought of, which may not enter into an Understanding in which a Breach hath been
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been already made wide enough to admit *Transubstantiation*. The Priests of *Baal* did not half so much deserve to be exposed by the *Prophet* for their Superstition and folly, as the Priests of the Church of *Rome* do for this senseless and stupid *Doctrine* of theirs with a *hard Name*. I shall only add this one thing more, That if this *Doctrine* were possible to be true, and clearly prov'd to be so ; yet it would be evidently uselels and to no purpose. For it pretends to change the substance of one thing into the substance of another thing that is already and before this change is pretended to be made. But to what purpose ? Not to make the *Body* of Christ, for that was already in Being ; and the Substance of the *Bread* is lost, nothing of it remaineth but the *Accidents* which are good for nothing, and indeed are nothing when the Substance is destroy'd and gone.

All that now remains is to make some *practical Inferences* from this *Doctrine* of the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*. And they shall be the same which God himself makes by *Moses*, which Text Deut. 6. also is cited by our Saviour, *Hear, O Israel, the* 4. *Lord thy God is one Lord ; and thou shalt love the Lord* Mark 12. 29. *thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul,* 30, 31. *and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength : And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* So that according to our Saviour the whole Duty of Man, the love of God and of our neighbour is founded in the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*. I. The

I. The love of God; The Lord thy God is One Lord, therefore thou shalt love Him with all thy heart, &c. this is the first and great Commandment: And it comprehends in it all the Duties of the first Table as naturally flowing from it. As that we should serve Him only, and pay no Religious Worship to any but to Him. For to pay Religious Worship to any thing is to make it a God and to acknowledge it for such: And therefore God being but One we can give Religious Worship to none but to Him only. And among all the parts of Religious Worship none is more peculiarly appropriated to the Deity than solemn Invocation and Prayer. For he to whom men address their Requests, at all times, and in all places, must be supposed to be always every where present, to understand all our desires and wants, and to be able to supply them; and this God only is, and can do.

So likewise from the Unity of the Divine Nature may be inferr'd, that we should not worship God by any sensible Image or Representation: Because God being a singular Being there is nothing like Him, or that can without injuring and debasing his most spiritual and perfect and immense Being be compared to Him: As He himself speaks in the Prophet, To whom will ye liken me, saith the Lord, and make me equal? And therefore with no Distinction whatsoever can it be lawful to give Religious Worship, or any part of it, to any but God: We

Isai. 46.
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can pray to none but to *Him*, because *He* only is every where present, and only knows the Hearts of ^{1 Kings} all the children of men ; which Solomon gives as the ^{8. 39.} reason why we should address our Supplications to God only, who dwelleth in the Heavens.

So that the Reason of these two Precepts is founded in the *Unity* and *Singularity* of the *Divine Nature*, and unless there be more Gods than *One*, we must worship *Him* only, and pray to none but *Him* : Because we can give *Invocation* to none but to *Him* only whom we believe to be *God* ; as St. Paul reasons, *How shall they call on Him* in Rom. ^{10. 14.} whom they have not believed ?

H. The love likewise of our Neighbour is founded in the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*, and may be inferr'd from it : *Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One Lord*, therefore thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. And the *Apostle* gives this reason why *Christians* should be at unity among themselves ; *There is One God and Father of all*, and therefore Eph. 4. 6. we should keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, that is, live in mutual love and peace. The *Prophet* likewise assigns this reason why all *Man-kind* should be upon good terms with one another, and not be injurious one to another, *Have we* Mal. 2. *not all One Father ? bath not One God created us ? Why do* 10. *we then deal treacherously every man against his brother.*

And therefore when we see such hatred and enmity among *Men*, such divisions and animosities

sities among *Christians*, we may not only ask *St. Paul's* question, *Is Christ divided?* that we cannot agree about serving him; either all to serve him in one way, or to bear with one another in our differences: I say we may not only ask *St. Paul's* question, *Is Christ divided?* but may ask further, *Is God divided?* Is there not *One God*, and are we not all his *Offspring*? Are we not all the *Sons of Adam*, *who was the Son of God?* So that if we trace our selves to our *Original*, we shall find a great nearness and equality among men: And this equality that we are all *Gods creatures and Image*, and that the *One only God* is the *Father of us all*, is a more real ground of mutual love, and peace, and equity in our dealings one with another, than any of those petty differences and distinctions of *strong and weak*, of *rich and poor*, of *wise and foolish*, of *base and honourable*, can be to encourage men to any thing of *insolence, injustice, and inequality of dealing* one towards another. Because that wherein we all agree, that we are the *Creatures and Children of God* and have all *One common Father*, is essential and constant; but those things wherein we differ are accidental and mutable, and happen to one another by turns.

Thus much may suffice to have spoken concerning the *first Proposition* in the *Text*, *There is one God*: To *Him, Father, Son, and H. Ghost* be all *Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power*, now and for ever. *Amen.*

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